

THE Baptist Record

JOURNAL OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION SINCE 1877

BRIEFS**SCHOOLS TO CHANGE RESTROOM POLICIES**

ASHEVILLE, N.C. (BP) — Two schools accused of restroom discrimination against transgender students recently settled for payouts and policy changes. Nova Classical Academy, a charter school in St. Paul, Minn., agreed Aug. 7 to adopt a far-reaching gender inclusion policy and pay \$120,000 to the parents of a kindergartener who was born a boy but identifies as a girl. The Pine-Richland School District in Pennsylvania recently settled a lawsuit by agreeing to pay each aggrieved student \$20,000 and attorney fees, rescind previous restroom use rules, and update its non-discrimination policy to include gender identity.

ICELAND, U.S. ABORTING FOR DOWN'S SYNDROME

REYKJAVIK, Iceland (BP) — A recent CBS News report disclosed that 81% of babies diagnosed with Down's Syndrome are aborted after genetic testing reveals the children expected to be born with the non-life threatening condition. Icelandic law requires all expectant mothers to be informed about the availability of prenatal genetic screening. America apparently isn't far behind Iceland in disposing of babies gestating with potential health problems. According to the CBS report, 67% of U.S. babies diagnosed with Down Syndrome were aborted from 1995-2011.

VT. BAPTIST COLLEGE PURCHASES CAMPUS

BENNINGTON, Vt. (BP) — Northeastern Baptist College (NEBC) has signed an agreement to purchase a former elementary school campus as its future home in Bennington, Vt., where the college opened four years ago. Northeastern Baptist College, online at nebvt.org, has established a partnership with the Baptist Convention of New England and Green Mountain Association in Vermont. It achieved Vermont accreditation and degree-granting authority in a unanimous vote by the State Board of Education in September 2014.



NBC News screen grab by BP

Responding to Charlottesville So. Baptist leaders

Baptists were already actively promoting racial harmony in the small community where Baptist former mayor Alvin Edwards has pastored

irs.

a counter protestor was killed and scores of people were injured by the time police were called to break up the violence that ensued during the protest. Two Virginia state troopers were also killed when the helicopter crashed that they were using to monitor the protests.

Edwards, pastor of Mount Zion First African Church — a member of the Baptist General Association of Virginia (BGAV) — had already organized the multidenominational Charlottesville Clergy Collective to build unity among faith leaders in the city and surrounding Albemarle County area.

see RESPONSE on p. 9



EDWARDS

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. (BP and local reports) — Before "alt-right" white supremacists converged on Charlottesville, Va., on Aug. 12 to protest the planned removal of a statue honoring Civil War Confederate hero Robert E. Lee and counter protestors gathered to challenge them, Southern



TILLERSON

Tillerson supports religious freedom

WASHINGTON (BP) — Southern Baptists and other religious freedom advocates praised U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson's defense Aug. 15 of religious freedom, especially his unequivocal labeling of the crimes of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria as genocide.

In introducing the International Religious Freedom Report for 2016, Tillerson said he was removing "any ambiguity from previous statements or reports by the State Department."

ISIS is clearly responsible for genocide against Yazidis, Christians and Shia Muslims in areas it controls or has controlled," Tillerson said. "ISIS is also responsible for crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing directed at these same groups, and in some cases against Sunni Muslims, Kurds, and other minorities."

see TILLERSON on p. 9

GuideStone: U.S. stock market may be set for period of volatility

DALLAS (BP) — As the U.S. stock market continues to eclipse all-time highs, analysts with GuideStone Financial Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention in Dallas caution that the markets may be set for a period of extended volatility.

"We believe the market is not pricing in the true risks in the environment," said David S. Spika, GuideStone's chief strategic investment officer said in a video in the series, Conversations with GuideStone.

"There's this perception that we're in some sort of Goldilocks environment, but we disagree. When you consider the fact that the Fed is raising interest

rates, they're talking about reducing the balance sheet, the economy is struggling to grow at a reasonable pace, and we've got so much political acrimony in Washington that we're not going to get any sort of policy

approval in the near-term, we think there is tremendous risk out there and we don't feel like the market is appropriately pricing that in at this point," Spika warned.

see GUIDESTONE on p. 9

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From the editor

WILLIAM PERKINS

'Absolutely' needed?

The administration of U.S. President Donald Trump announced a few weeks ago that taxpayer funding of explicit sex ed programs for young school children will be cut by more than \$213 million in his 2018 federal government budget.

Reaction was immediate. "We absolutely need these kind of programs," said Kelly Wilson, a health professor at Texas A&M University. In a letter to U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price, the Democrat Party's female U.S. senators wrote, "This action is shortsighted and puts at risk the health and well-being of women and our most vulnerable youth..."

Exactly what sex ed programs are "absolutely" needed, and without taxpayer funding would put young people at risk? Consider a 2015 conference for school kids conducted by a group called Iowa Safe Schools and billed as an anti-bullying event.

About 1,000 underage Iowa children who attended were subjected to presentations such as a profanity-filled tirade from a cross-dresser, graphic instructions on perverted sex acts previously known only to lower animals, and how to construct fake sex organs, according to a Fox News report at the time.

"We were absolutely flabbergasted," one father whose daughter attended the event told reporter Todd Starnes. "It was graphic and pornographic. From a parent's perspective I cannot think of anywhere this should be an acceptable conversation. For paid speakers to be in front of a group talking about how to avoid choking during oral sex — I cannot fathom where that would be an appropriate conversation."

Starnes confirmed the nature of the event with a high school principal whose students attended. "Some students and teachers were surprised by some of the content," the principal wrote in an e-mail to Starnes. "Not what they thought they were getting into. That would be the extent of my comments."

The Family Leader, a strongly conservative Christian organization headquartered in Pleasant Hill, Iowa, wasn't so reticent after

Bob Vander Plaats, president of the group, sent an observer to sit in on the conference.

"I had a chance to speak with The Family Leader's observer," Starnes reported. "She told me students were given advice on medical transitions from male to female and vice versa — along with information on medication to delay puberty, the observer told me.

They talked about binders — things that compress a girl's chest to make it appear you don't have what is there," the observer told me. "And they talked about how students can make fake testicles by filling pantyhose with rice and sewing them into their panties."

Starnes wrote that he tried to contact Iowa Safe Schools, to no avail. No surprise there. The group obviously cannot justify misleading parents about the content of their conferences and apparently doesn't suffer criticism very well.

However, Iowa Safe Schools did find time to engage in some character assassination on their web site, where they accused Vander Plaats of engaging in "mean spirited rhetoric" and The Family Leader of trying to "bully, intimidate, and take away a special event for Iowa's students, parents, and educators."

Mississippi is not Iowa. Iowa is not part of the South — culturally, politically, or spiritually — but we would be naive to believe similar groups don't exist in our state whose chief goal is to twist young people's thinking about human sexuality and encourage them to overcome their natural modesty about the subject.

We would also be naive to believe that these groups would not spread their vile philosophies of life through misleading and deceptive information about their conferences and other contacts with our young people.

Being a parent in this day and age is exhausting enough, and along comes another battle for the hearts and minds of our children — our very young children. It's not alarmism to believe such can happen here. Just ask the good people of Iowa.

Keep up. Be aware. Be prepared.

Moving to Partnerships

Travelers passing through a major airport in Latin America or the Caribbean will likely notice the groups in matching T-shirts.

The people in Latin America and the Caribbean have been blessed by many of these groups whose members choose to spend summers and vacation days sharing the Gospel; training pastors; doing service projects; ministering to orphans, widows, and the underprivileged; and helping plant churches.

These short-term mission teams are effective in initiating relationships and creating interest in the Gospel among locals. Unfortunately, these teams are unable to accomplish the in-depth discipleship necessary among the least reached peoples of the Americas.

There is a need for churches to transition from a mission trip mindset — where you're in, out, and back again a year later — to a long-term strategy brought about through mission partnerships.

What is a partnership?

A partnership is when a church has adopted a people group or urban area and sends small teams four to six times per year, over the course of at least five years, to share the Gospel and train disciples.

Before coming, church members spend time researching the people from the adopted area, praying for them, identifying ways to have a legitimate presence among them, learning how to proclaim the Gospel in a way that the people can understand, and developing a contextualized process for discipleship.

During the trip, people from the U.S. church work closely with national partners or long-term workers rather than operate independent of a local believer or church.

A U.S. church serving through a partnership returns to the same community and develops the relationships needed to overcome religious confusion (syncretism) and local distrust of outsiders. Simply put, the more the locals know you, the more weight they give to your message.



Guest opinion
with Jeff Holeman

Committed U.S. church partners have seen breakthroughs in southern Mexico because they've spent three years committed to a partnership with an unreached people group. These churches have pushed back the darkness despite opposition from some in the Mexican community, weather challenges during their visits, and leadership transitions within their own churches.

The people of Central and South America are ideal for new partnerships because of their proximity to the U.S., the presence of long-term workers with whom to partner, and the outstanding need for the Gospel to get to unreached places. Here are two reasons your church should consider moving to a deeper level of involvement through partnership:

The harvest is ready

Throughout the Americas there are more than 300 unreached people and places in need of a Gospel witness, according to data on peoplegroups.org. There also are gigantic cities such as Mexico City where the predominant religion teaches Christian tradition but often omits the opportunity to have a personal relationship with Jesus.

A partnership gives the church the longevity to model for the unreached the difference between a religious tradition and a vibrant, growing relationship with Jesus. Though there are followers of Jesus, they often lack the resources and fellow believers to practice healthy discipleship.

The harvest (Luke 10) is waiting to hear the Gospel in a way they can

see HOLEMAN on p. 11

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Are Anabaptists the ancestors of modern Baptists?

By Ben Hawkins
Correspondent

At one Anabaptist museum in Austria, visitors can see the chains with which Anabaptist women were shackled to their homes. The women had accepted the Anabaptist message without their husbands' consent and were baptized. The women were allowed to live since their husbands needed them to raise their children and tend to their homes — but they would do so in chains.

The chains remind of the intense persecution 16th-century Anabaptists suffered. Indeed, many women suffered for this cause. Roughly one-third of the 900 Anabaptists mentioned in the *Martyrs Mirror*, a sort of Anabaptist book of martyrs written in the 1600s, were women.

Catholics and Protestants alike were intent on wiping out Anabaptism. They persecuted anyone who accepted or, especially, preached the Anabaptist message, seeing this so-called heresy as a spiritual disease that threatened the souls of men and women as well as the stability of society.

Anabaptists were tortured, mocked, starved, imprisoned, beheaded, burned, and drowned.

Many Anabaptists expected nothing less than to suffer for their faith.

"It is surely true that as soon as one wants to begin living as a Christian, one experiences none other than Christ experienced," Anabaptist martyr Leonhard Schiemer (c. 1500-1528) once wrote. "It is to this that you are called, for Christ also suffered and left us an example, to follow in his footsteps."

In 1527, Schiemer himself was imprisoned for seven weeks during a bitter Alpine winter before being beheaded and then burned. Partly because of Schiemer's courage amid suffering, Pilgram Marpeck (1495-1556), who would become one of the few Anabaptist leaders to die naturally, soon accepted believer's baptism.

Marpeck later wrote that every follower of Christ must submit "to the fellowship of suffering under God's hand and discipline."

Schiemer, Marpeck, and other Anabaptists had confidence that, in the words of early church theologian Tertullian, "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church."

Did any modern-day churches grow from the seed

planted by the persecuted Anabaptists? Do modern-day Baptists themselves have Anabaptist roots? Did the Anabaptist seed grow into the modern Baptist church?

Doubtless, the answer to the first question is, "Yes." The answer to the second question is that several religious groups throughout the world claim an Anabaptist ancestry. Among them are:

■ Mennonites, named after 16th-century Anabaptist Menno Simons.

■ Hutterites, named after 16th-century Anabaptist Jacob Hutter.

■ Amish, named after 17th-century Anabaptist Jacob Amman.

The third question is more complicated. In fact, historians have long debated whether the Baptist movement, which grew up in England nearly 100 years after the Reformation began, was influenced in any way by the Anabaptists.

This historical debate can be quite complex and nitty-gritty, looking even at indirect influences that the Anabaptists may have had on the later Baptists. For example, one historian has suggested that the Reformed emphasis on church discipline, which was later adopted by the English Baptists, was originally developed in response to the Anabaptist emphasis on church discipline.

Amid this complexity, one can safely say the Anabaptists drew a line in the sand regarding some important truths of Scripture and Baptists, whether they realized it or not, later sided with the Anabaptists regarding these truths.

The Anabaptists of the Reformation have much to teach contemporary Baptists," Paige Patterson, president of Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth, said in 2012 during a conference on Anabaptism and Contemporary Baptists.

He went on to note that, however interesting it may be, the question about the historical connection between Baptists and Anabaptists is really of little consequence. Nevertheless, he added, the Anabaptists championed five convictions that Baptists today should defend:

■ Anabaptists dedicated themselves to the Reformation truth of *Sola Scriptura*. While they shared this conviction about the supremacy of Scripture with other Reformers, the Anabaptists uniquely believed the church should be shaped



Tom, Leyden, Germany, 1535



after the New Testament model — a truth that impacted their support of believer's baptism and their beliefs about the relationship between the church and civil authorities.

■ Anabaptists emphasized the believer's church, which consists only of people who are

dedicated to Christ Jesus, who they believed alone is Lord.

■ Anabaptists endorsed religious liberty and insisted civil authorities shouldn't tamper with the church or its theology.

"The Anabaptists were the first ones to question the whole concept that to be a citizen was to be a churchman and to be a churchman was to be a citizen," Southern Baptist church historian James Leo Garrett once said. "The Christian society of Europe was one, and church and state were one."

"The religion of the ruler would be the religion of the people. In most places, that was the case. The Anabaptists challenged that whole idea."

■ Anabaptists exemplified how Christians should stay true to the faith even amid persecution. "Completely surrender to God under his cross," one Anabaptist wrote. "Accept the suffering, persecution, and cross, inward and outward, which will result and will not fail to come to you."

"Such is the school of Christ into which he calls all who want to become his disciples."

Acknowledgements: The content of this article was adapted from articles written by Hawkins, associate editor of The Pathway, news journal of the Missouri Baptist Convention, for the Fall 2012 edition of Southwestern News, the alumni magazine of Southwestern Seminary, based on an article written in the same magazine by Sharayah Colter, writer for the Southern Baptist TEXAN, news journal of the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention. The article appears here courtesy of Baptist Press. Edited for style and clarity.

Two of the prominent definitions of "change" are (1) money you get back when you purchase something, and (2) to alter or make something different. The second definition is a part of every one of our lives, every day. Change is forever taking place. Unless you're a baby in need of a new diaper, you probably do not welcome change most of the time. Regardless of whether we like it or not — welcome it or not — definition number two just keeps coming.

Since it's such a vital part of everyday existence, spend a few moments thinking about change. What are the causes of change? Everything in life causes and creates some change. There's a long list of events that bring about change — birth, death, marriage, graduation, job, seasons, holidays, flat tire, broken air conditioner, divorce, sickness, disease, exercise, weather, broken bone, sunrise, sunset, heat of the noon sun in August, the moon as it waxes and wanes, bacon frying, coffee perking, elections, chitlins being cooked. As you can imagine, the list is absolutely endless.

Whatever you put on the list, there are two items to remember regardless of where change originates. One, you often do not control the forces that are bringing about change. On a typical day, that's probably true for most of us and one of the reasons life gets to be where we feel out of control. We need to keep in mind that while you and I may not be able to control what's bringing change to our lives, we can control how we react and respond to change.

Vacation Bible School



PHILADELPHIA CHURCH, ETTA: Vacation Bible School 2017.



FAIR RIVER CHURCH, BROOKHAVEN, held VBS July 10 - 14 with over 70 registered clubbers/workers and one profession of faith. Jay Anderson, pastor.



HICKORY CHURCH, HICKORY, concluded its Terrific Tuesday program Aug. 6 with a performance of the musical Acorns to Oaks. Terrific Tuesdays continue VBS all summer on Tuesday mornings.

Directions
With Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

Change

Change is all around us and will continue to come at us. I heard a man say that the only place you can go where there's no more change is the cemetery. Problem is, he's just wrong. Not long ago I was walking through the old, old part of an old cemetery. I observed ongoing changes even though these folks were gone. There were broken and tilted headstones and sunken graves that indicated change is taking place. The grass is growing. The vines are reaching out. The further you investigate, the more change you see even after death.

The challenge is that nothing stays the same — not you, not me, not the environment around us. You get it. We are always in the process of change. The challenge is to see change taking place

and come to some understanding of what we can do to meet it. More often than not, people interpret change as bad, even wrong. That is not factual. Sometimes change means that things are going to get worse and sometimes it means things are going to get better. The dilemma for most of us when we consider changes and challenges is what looks like it's bad is sometimes going to be good. Sometimes what looks good is going to be bad.

Think about it. Few things in life can be worse than facing the challenge as an elementary school kid to learn all the multiplication tables. Two times two is four. Four times four is sixteen. I remember that I thought it was impossible for a human being to absorb all that stuff. I had friends who felt the same way. We

just rejected all the changes the system was trying to impose on us. Our sweet teacher kept pressing us until weeks later, every one of us thought, "Well, that wasn't too bad."

We started off thinking that excruciating process was bad, but I retained that valuable information and often wonder if I've ever had a day in my life when I didn't use the multiplication tables. Those tables are crucial at different points, such as balancing a checkbook or figuring automobile mileage. The point is that when change comes to us, the challenge is not so much to figure out if it's good or bad, but to find the good and maximize it.

One last thought about change — contemplate the confidence you will develop as change comes at you every day. There is confidence you can glean and have and implement because God is going to be with you. Whether the temperature is in the teens or soaring to 113 degrees, the Lord is unchanging in His relationship with you and His care for you. He will be with you, walk with you, and help you to deal with the shifting changes of life by His steady, unchanging hand. While everything in your world may seem to be changing and you may feel overwhelmed, burdened, or bewildered, just remember what God says in His Word. You can anchor your life to Him as He reminds us, "I am the Lord, I change not" (Mal. 3:6).

The author can be contacted at directions@mbcb.org.

Revivals & Homecomings

► **Forest Church, Scott Association:** 150th anniversary, Aug. 26 - 27; Sat., musical and fellowship, 6 p.m.; Sun., worship, 10:30 a.m. followed by fellowship meal.

► **New Hope Church, Tupelo:** Homecoming, Aug. 27; Sunday School, 9:45 a.m.; worship, 11 a.m., followed by meal; Ricky Blythe, speaker.

► **Union Church, Tylertown:** Revival, Aug. 27 - 30; James Messer, speaker; Jimmy Smith, pastor.

► **Euclatubba Church, Sartell:** Homecoming, Aug. 27; Gloryroad Quartet mini-concert, 10 a.m.; worship, 11 a.m., followed by lunch; James Gillette, speaker; Scott Witcher, pastor.

► **Siloam Church, Siloam Community:** Homecoming, Aug. 27; worship, 10:30 a.m., followed by lunch; James Fortenberry, speaker; music, Hilmer Bynum and Drewe Llyn Jeffcoat; Raymond Jeffcoat, pastor.

► **Corinth Church, Heidelberg:** Revival, Aug. 27 - Sept. 1; Sun., 11 a.m. followed by lunch and afternoon service; Mon. - Fri., 7 p.m.; Bill Saye, speaker; Jamie Matthews, pastor.

► **Bethel Church, Copiah County:** 150th homecoming, Aug. 27; services, 10:30 a.m., followed by covered dish lunch; all former pastors and members encouraged to come celebrate; Tyson Windom, pastor.

BIBLIOCRYPTER

ZPX BC VZKX EPJH BCI, XZENBJCI, JBT

YZKJB BZJB UZXC JBCC OBHQC NH KP

SCZGC, ZPX AC OBHQC HY JBT SQZNEC.

UZIR YKFC: JBKIJT-YHEI

Clue: X = D

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Luke 12:2

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Church sees bright future for conservation

CAMPTON, Ky. (BP) — A Kentucky church is embracing solar power as a means to help the community and reduce their carbon footprint.

Campton Church in Campton, part of the Red River Association, installed 80 solar panels on the roof of the church during a project sponsored and installed by SonLight Power, an Ohio-based nonprofit that provides renewable electricity to communities worldwide. This was SonLight Power's first project in the United States.

Campton's pastor, Gary Conner, sees the project as a "way to invest in the community." The three basic ways he sees the solar panels impacting the community and the church are through educational opportunities; sending a message that conservation is important; and financial savings for the congregation.

Conner hopes the solar panels will contribute to educational opportunities in the community for science classes to take the opportunity to learn about solar energy and observe it firsthand at Campton Baptist. Additionally, he relishes the opportunity to explain the system and show the panels to "anyone who wants to come by."

He also is excited to engage the eastern Kentucky community by sending a message that Campton Baptist takes conservation seriously. "We are trying to harness the power from the sun that God has already

given us and to use that wisely, and perhaps it would be something that out of curiosity people would come and check out."

Finally, the church desires not only to save on their utility bill, but also put those savings into missions and ministry.

The idea for the panels was brought to the church's attention by longtime church member Zach Collier. "We want our community to know that we love them, and that we love this earth and we want to take good care of it," Collier, a deacon, said in a WKYT interview.

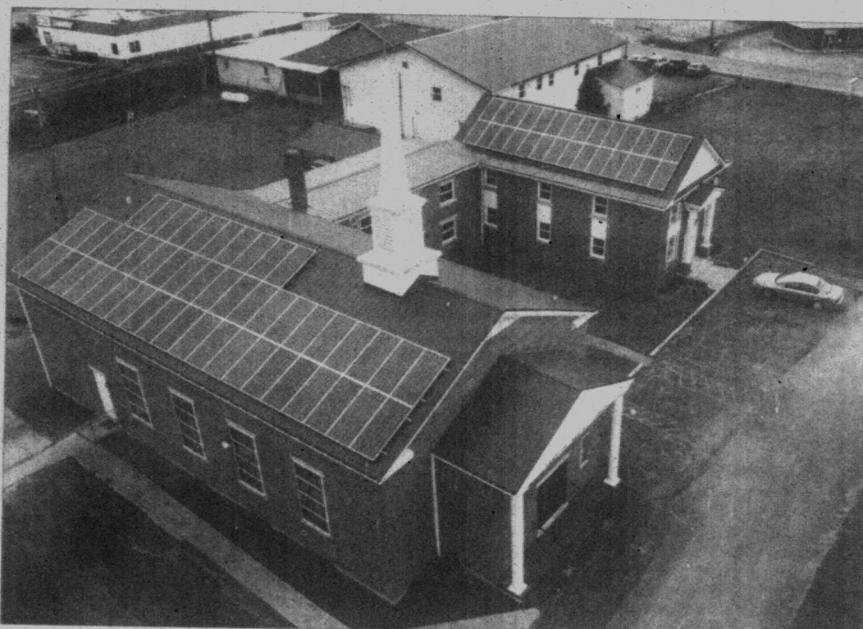
"While we remember times past fondly, we're looking to the future with this project. Renewable energy will be part of our future," he said.

The system, which generates 22,000 watts of power, will aid the surrounding community as well. When the church is not using the power, the solar energy will go back into the local electrical grid. Over the course of 40 years, the church expects a savings of \$120,000.

They plan to install a geothermal unit for heating and air conditioning in the future.

"Generations of families here at Campton Baptist Church will have zero carbon footprint," Collier said.

In addition, the church hopes that by spreading awareness of the use of solar power, more of the generally coal-powered community will take notice and eventually jobs in solar power will be created in the area.



SAVING, HELPING — Campton Church in Kentucky is embracing solar power as a means to help its community in eastern Kentucky reduce their carbon footprint as well as save on the church's energy costs. (BP photo)

"It takes people to make solar panels. It takes people to know how to install solar panels and to maintain them, so anything you do is going to generate revenue in terms of energy because people are always going to need it, and we're definitely going to need

more of it in the future than less of it," Collier told WYMT.

Conner added that the church wants to do anything they can to be good stewards. "God calls us to be good stewards of what He has created. When we take raw materials and use them to help aid the

creation, we're doing what we're supposed to do."

Renewable energy such as solar and wind power are key avenues of conservation versus "filling cities and the atmosphere with extra carbon and things that might be harmful," he added.

Task force to address SBC evangelistic outreach efforts

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP and local reports) — How to increase Southern Baptists' passion for personal evangelism and encourage preachers to include evangelistic invitations in every sermon were among the topics discussed Aug. 14-15 at the first meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) task force on soul winning and evangelistic preaching.

Appointed by SBC President Steve Gaines, senior pastor of Bellevue Church in suburban Memphis, the task force stems from a motion approved by messengers attending the 2017 SBC annual meeting in Phoenix that a committee be established to suggest how Southern Baptists might be more effective in personal soul winning and evangelistic preaching.

Mississippi Baptists are not represented on the task force, which is being headed up by Southwestern Seminary President Paige Patterson.

Gaines attended the inaugural meeting and told Baptist Press (BP) the task force "had a great two days together."

"We talked about the decline in baptisms in our Southern Baptist Convention. We discussed various possible reasons for that. We talked about the need for increasing people's passion for personal evangelism, and we discussed various ways to do that."

"We also discussed the fact that we believe every sermon should present the Gospel message and also appeal to people to respond, whether that's a come-forward invitation or encouraging someone to pray and invite Christ in their hearts then and there... or inviting them to go to a room after the service where they can counsel with someone."

Task Force member Noe Garcia, pastor of North Phoenix Church in Arizona, told BP in written comments, "We had

rich discussion about evangelistic strategies and methods that are effective, while also processing the areas in which we have been ineffective. We all have a clear and united understanding that there cannot be an effective evangelism strategy without the Spirit of God moving and directing us."

"While the first meeting brought much hope and fruit for the future, we recognize that there is much work to be done. Pray for us as we continue to meet."

The task force on soul winning and evangelistic preaching is distinct from the disciple-making task force appointed in 2016 by North American Mission Board President Kevin Ezell and LifeWay Christian Resources President Thom Rainer. Like the task force appointed by Gaines, the disciple-making task force will report to the convention at the 2018 SBC annual meeting in Dallas.

MS POSITIONS

CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH IN NORTH CENTRAL MS IS SEEKING A FULL TIME PASTOR. The church is located in the outskirts of Greenwood, close to the Carroll/Bolton County line. Benefits include a parsonage and Guide Stone retirement contributions. Send resume to Roy Smith, Calvary Baptist Church, 4644 Billy Stone Rd, Greenwood, MS 38330 or email to cbggreenwood@bellsouth.net

GUM SPRINGS CHURCH, BRAXTON, MISSISSIPPI SEEKS PIANIST to serve during Sunday morning and evening worship, and Sunday morning choir practice. Please submit resume to the Pianist Search Committee c/o Music Director, 121 Victoria Pl, Brandon, Mississippi 39042, or email to jmmanderson1575@gmail.com

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Just for the Record



The Rubies of **MARS HILL CHURCH, PETAL**, held their 2nd annual tea party and fashion show Aug. 5. The theme was "Consider the lilies..."



TUCKERS CROSSING CHURCH, LAUREL, recently honored their children and youth Bible drillers. Youth leaders were Sharla Smith and Spring Walters; children's leaders were Carolyn, Kevin, and Abby Holfield, Bobby Bridges, and Dakota Forbes.



BLYTHE CREEK CHURCH, CHOCTAW COUNTY, under the direction of Todd Chesser, held a Blessing of the Backpacks prayer for the children and youth during morning worship Aug. 13.



The GA's of **PUCKETT CHURCH, PUCKETT**, held their recognition service in May.



The youth of **STEELE CHURCH, FOREST**, went on a mission trip to Mission Arlington, Arlington, Tex. Shown are the youth and chaperones. Andy and Britney Smith, youth directors; Joey Smith, pastor.



NEW MONTPELIER CHURCH, CLAY COUNTY, dedicated their new worship center and celebrated their 91st anniversary July 30. A barbecue luncheon was offered after the services. Jim Futral, speaker; Steve and Becky Carver, music; Jim Murray presented a history of the church.



COVENANT LIFE CHURCH, COLLINSVILLE, recently celebrated their ribbon cutting for the PromiseLand Journey, a biblical museum. Exhibited is a life-size tabernacle of Moses. Jesus is shown in each piece. There are also replicas of Jesus' cross and tomb, and models of Jerusalem in Jesus' time and the promised land. Bill Freeman, pastor.



The Young at Heart group from **CALVARY CHURCH, NEW Tn**, enjoyed an interesting and informative tour of the PromiseLand Journey led by pastor Bill Freeman, Collinsville, Aug. 8.

Just for the Record



Several members of the men's ministry at **TIL-LATOBIA CHURCH, YALOBUSA COUNTY**, completed a wheelchair ramp for Frances Adkins. Shown are Philip Cross, Billy Fowler, Mark Hartley, Donald Bloodworth, and Adkins. Mike Ramage, pastor.



The congregation of **HANDBORO CHURCH, GULFPORT** collected school supplies for use by Anniston Elementary School. The supplies will be used throughout the school year by students and staff. The supplies were delivered by adults and children from the congregation to the school along with some snacks for the teacher workroom.



Judy Hardy was presented with a plaque and gift in recognition of her 25th anniversary as financial/administrative assistant at **FIRST CHURCH, VICKSBURG**. Shown are pastor Matt Buckles, Hardy, and Paul Pinson.



EAST PHILADELPHIA CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA, ordained Zach Butler to the gospel ministry. He is going to First Church, Picayune as associate pastor of children's ministry. Shown is Butler and student pastor Rusty Parsons.



BETHEL CHURCH, PULASKI, recently ordained a new deacon, Jason Harrison, shown with his wife Jennifer and pastor Curtis Roland.



SUNRISE CHURCH, LEAKE COUNTY, had six kids to attend Camp Garaywa.



GILLSBURG CHURCH, GILLSBURG, recognized participants of their Summer Reading Club.



The WOM of **NEW PROSPECT CHURCH, BROOKHAVEN**, made hospital gowns for the hospice ministry.



Milton Bell, Bobby Irving, Betty Finch, Judy Howell, Janet Parker, and John Parker went on a mission trip to Manassas, Va., through the **COLLABORATIVE ASSOCIATION**. Irving is pastor of **PHILADELPHIA CHURCH, ETTA**, and Parker is pastor of **SPRING HILL CHURCH, WATERFORD**.



STANTON CHURCH, NATCHEZ, had a Layman's Day choir. Minister of Music, Steve Strebeck. Steve Purvis, pastor.

First Person: Want to quit, pastor? Don't do it.

By H.B. Charles Jr.
Correspondent

First in a two-part series

As a young pastor embroiled in congregational conflict, I once told my pastoral mentor I was going to resign my church.

As our conversation progressed, he identified the motivation behind my planned resignation: I just wanted to preach one Sunday in peace. He warned me, however, that trouble would find me whenever I preached the Bible and lifted the name of Jesus. He encouraged me to stay put, keep preaching, and not grow weary in well doing.

I heeded his counsel, and I am glad I did not quit even though the conflict in my church continued for several more years. I wouldn't trade anything for what God taught me as I preached under pressure.

On the other side of leadership challenges over the years, I believe you have not really learned to preach until you preach through a storm. Unending sunshine creates shallow pulpits. Preaching through a storm anchors the pulpit to the tried and proven Word of God.

So, how do you preach faithfully under the pressure that arises against your leadership, ministry, or pulpit?

Preach the Word

During the darkest days of my ministry, I struggled



CHARLES

I believe you have not really learned to preach until you preach through a storm. Unending sunshine creates shallow pulpits. Preaching through a storm anchors the pulpit to the tried and proven Word of God.

to see my way to the pulpit. I did not feel like studying, praying, or preaching. I believe this was the Enemy's primary strategy. Waves rise from the pews to eject the preacher from the pulpit. The faithful preacher must hold the stern and preach through the storm — but avoid preaching to or about the storm, unless it is necessary.

Preach the Word to lead the congregation forward. Preaching through a storm introduced me to consecutive exposition. Series preaching helped me respond to the Holy Spirit's leadership, rather than reacting to my opponents' shenanigans.

Pray without ceasing

The Lord does not teach us to pray in a classroom. He teaches us to pray on a battlefield. In the classroom, you may learn the truth about prayer but it is on the battlefield that you learn the power of prayer. Ministerial battles drive the pastor-soldier to the spiritual dependence needed for effective prayer. Pray when you feel like it. Pray when you don't feel like it. Pray until you do feel like it.

Guard your heart against bitterness

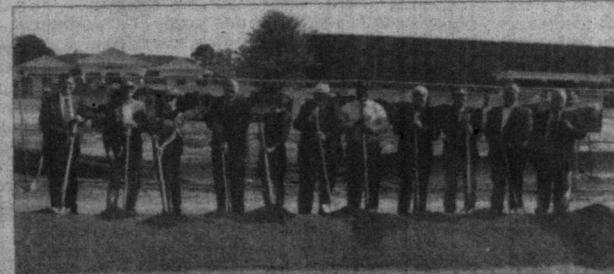
As I preached through a storm at my first church, a friend pleaded with me to leave lest the experience make me bitter. I did not feel free to leave my assignment, but my friend's concern burdened me to pray unceasingly that God would keep me from becoming bitter. I am grateful that God answered my prayers. Stubborn sheep tend to make cranky shepherds. If you do not guard your heart, church conflict can make the preacher angry, bitter and cynical.

Charles, pastor of Shiloh Metropolitan Church in Jacksonville, Fla., is serving as the first African American president of the Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference.

College News



The **WILLIAM CAREY UNIVERSITY** College of Osteopathic Medicine welcomed the class of 2021 during the annual white coat ceremony held July 29 at Main Street Baptist Church in Hattiesburg. This is the eighth class of medical students to enroll in the College of Osteopathic Medicine, which opened in 2010. This class of 103 students was selected from more than 2,500 applicants and includes 73 men and 30 women representing 24 states. There are currently 414 students enrolled in COM, which is the only osteopathic medical school in the state of Mississippi. Several of the students who graduated with the first class in 2014 are now completing their residencies and will soon begin practicing medicine.



WILLIAM CAREY UNIVERSITY celebrated on August 2 the groundbreaking for the new Tatum Court and the Asbury Academic Building. The new Tatum Court will replace the historic 1914 building which was declared a complete loss after the January 21, 2017, tornado that hit campus. The first floor of the three-story administration building will include a reception area and offices for financial aid, registrar, and financial affairs. The second floor will include offices for the president, academic vice president, provost, human resources, and marketing. A board room and conference rooms also will be available on the second floor. The third floor will provide much-needed space for special events and banquets. The estimated cost of the 28,909-square-foot building, including architectural fees, is \$9.3 million. The Asbury Academic Building will house the Ralph and Naomi Noonkester School of Arts and Letters classrooms and faculty offices that were in the old Tatum Court. The building also includes space for the Lucile Parker Gallery. The building on Tuscan Avenue that previously housed the gallery and apartments was a total loss from the tornado. The new building is being named in honor of the Asbury Foundation, which gave \$2 million to the university's tornado recovery efforts. The 12,000-square-foot building will cost approximately \$2.2 million.

Staff Changes



OAK GROVE CHURCH, ME. RIDIAN, has called Roy Scott Harrell as pastor. Harrell and Susan come to Oak Grove from Calvary Church, Butler, Ala. He has served churches in Florida, South Carolina, Mississippi, California, and Alabama. Harrell earned a D.M. in Leadership from Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, Mo., and holds a Bachelor's and two Masters degrees from Luther Rice Bible College and Seminary in Lithonia, Ga. He has been married to Susan since 1974, and they have two children and ten grandchildren.

Old manuscripts yield the DNA narrative of the times

ASHEVILLE, N.C. (BP) — Scholars study old manuscripts by analyzing linguistics and writing styles to learn about the authors and the world in which they lived, but researchers are missing a wealth of information they could glean from biological materials in the texts because libraries prohibit invasive sampling of rare and precious books.

"It's even harder to sample a rare book than human fossils or teeth," Matthew Collins, a biochemist who has spent the last five years studying a 900-year-old

copy of the Gospel of Luke, told *Science Magazine*.

Collins and his team have created a non-damaging way to collect DNA and other biological substances from old manuscripts by sampling tiny fibers librarians pull out of the books when they dry clean the pages.

Researchers who analyzed the biological material from the Gospel of Luke learned scribes at St. Augustine's Abbey in Canterbury, England, most likely produced the book around 1120 A.D. and used calf,

sheep, and goat skins for the pages.

Timothy Stinson, a medieval poetry scholar at North Carolina State University, anticipates biological analysis of old texts will reveal "the whole bustling medieval world of monks, scribes, readers, poets, country gentlemen, and anyone who touched the books over the centuries."

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GUIDESTONE

cont. from p. 1

"The one thing we encourage investors to do is not overreact to short-term moves in the market," he said, adding that there is going to be a correction at some point but investors should not let short-term moves affect their long-term investment strategy.

Spika noted that ultimately the Lord is in control.

The Conversations with GuideStone videos are available for free by visiting guidestonefunds.com/conversations.

GuideStone Funds announced within the past month its new Strategic Alternatives Fund that offers diversification aiming to address increased market volatility.

The fund is available to retirement plan participants in GuideStone's employer-sponsored retirement plans as well as other eligible GuideStone investors and financial advisors. The fund seeks to provide absolute returns with both lower volatility than, and low correlation with, traditional equity and fixed-income markets.

The term "absolute returns" means that an investment aims to generate a consistently positive single digit total return in most market environments. When speaking of the fund having a low correlation to equity (stock) and fixed-income (bond) markets, it is expected to have much lower price variability than those asset classes.

Like all GuideStone Funds, the Strategic Alternatives Fund is subject to GuideStone's socially responsible investing policy, which states that GuideStone Funds does not invest in any company that is publicly recognized as being in the alcohol, tobacco, gambling, pornography, or abortion industries or any company whose products, services, or activities are publicly recognized as being incompatible with the moral and ethical posture of GuideStone.

Retirement plan and other retail investors interested in learning how to incorporate the Strategic Alternatives Fund into their portfolios can e-mail info@GuideStone.org or call GuideStone Customer Solutions at (888) 98-GUIDE.

Submission Guidelines

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published.

Preferred method: news may be submitted electronically to the e-mail address below, and must be included in the message segment of an e-mail form. Secondary method: news may be typewritten or neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper and mailed. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone. Due to ever-present virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments in JPEG format are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs must be submitted electronically via e-mail, as attachments in JPEG format. Hard copy photographs mailed through the postal service will not be accepted. Photographs must be clear, sharp, and well-lit. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. Photographs containing inappropriate gestures and objectionable clothing will not be published. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution items that do not reproduce well on newsprint are generally not publishable.

There is no guarantee that news items and/or photographs will be published, and unsolicited material will not be acknowledged or returned. All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date. Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis. These guidelines are not meant to be exhaustive.

Submit news to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.

RESPONSE

cont. from p. 1

A day after the protests, Mount Zion Church co-hosted a worship service with First Church, Charlottesville, attended by Virginia Gov. Terry McAuliffe, other political leaders, clergy, and lay members.

First Church was the first black congregation in the area to begin cooperating with the Southern Baptist Convention, beginning in 1979.

Edwards, who served as Charlottesville mayor from 1990-92, witnessed the weekend protest from his car as he was leaving the main campus of the University of Virginia, located in Charlottesville, where he had been scheduled to speak before a state of emergency was declared.

"As I drove around down Water Street, I just saw the neo-Nazis and the white supremacists with their automatic weapons and their poles, and I saw that at the beginning," Edwards told WUSA9-TV in an interview posted on YouTube Aug. 14.

"They didn't come to have a peaceful demonstration. They came ready to fight and to provoke folks to fight," he said.



GAINES



MOORE



DAY



PAGE

In a related story, Southern Baptist pastors and leaders denounced racism and called for prayer in the wake of the Charlottesville violence.

Steve Gaines, president of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and senior pastor of Bellevue Church in suburban Memphis, described the rally as "a gathering of hate, ignorance, and bigotry."

"God loves everyone the same," said Gaines. "For anyone, regardless of skin color or ethnicity, to disdain another human being because of race is as un-Christlike as can be. Christians must reject and repudiate such alt-right groups and work for peace and goodwill among all people."

Russell Moore, president of the SBC Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission in Nashville, said in a column for The Washington Post newspaper, "White supremacy is Satanism. Even

a strong and clear statement is both needed and appropriate."

Tillerson "went further than previous administrations — committing to protect targeted minorities from violent extremism even after ISIS is defeated and to preserving their culture heritage," said Nina Shea, director of the Hudson Institute's Center for Religious Freedom in New York City and a former USCIRF chairwoman.

Kansas Gov. Sam Brownback has been nominated by the President to fill the vacant position of ambassador-at-large for international religious freedom. The nomination is currently before the U.S. Senate.

TILLERSON

cont. from p. 1

Tillerson described protection of such persecuted groups as "a human rights priority for the Trump administration" and promised continued work with others in the Middle East not only to guard the religious minorities but to preserve their cultural heritage.

Matt Hawkins, a policy director for the Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission in Nashville, said, "We're grateful for Secretary Tillerson's leadership this week on interna-

tional religious freedom by explicitly emphasizing the United States has both the moral imperative and strategic interest to include the issue in our diplomacy.

"The trends in global persecution and extremism underscore the need for the International Religious Freedom office to rise in prominence within the State Department."

"He expressed unequivocally that ISIS is responsible for genocide against Yezidis, Christians, and Shi'a Muslims," said Daniel Mark, chairman of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), in a written release. "Such

Truth is not relative.

Find it in the One who is the way, truth, and life.

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life.

From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Christ today, contact a local Southern Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

THE VILLAGE VIEW



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GIFTS OF HONOR AND MEMORY

A portion of The Village View is allocated each month to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this sensitive, meaningful, and helpful medium. This feature is hopefully designed to further honor, with thanks and respect, those who are and have been special to our special friends.

JULY

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AUGUST 1-15

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AUGUST 1-15

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Mr. Bob Martin
Ms. Martha Sellers
Mr. Doyle McGee
Ralph, Mildred & Nancy
Gardner
Peggy Morgan
Stanley King



The children at SKENE BAPTIST CHURCH collected items for The Baptist Children's Village during their 2017 Vacation Bible School.

BCV EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

The BCV employs Christian, mission-minded, husband and wife teams, without dependent children or pets, to serve in the position of Houseparents. The couples must be mature Christian adults with personal integrity, character and of good reputation with standards and ethics expected of any member of The Baptist Children's Village staff.

They receive a salary with benefits and are provided a private bedroom and meals while on duty. The primary job responsibility of Houseparents is to maintain a home-like environment that models healthy, Christian family living for children and youth residents. They are the primary caregivers and help with everything from transportation and homework to laundry and meals when on duty.

Houseparent responsibilities are varied and somewhat dependent upon which campus and to which cottage the couple is assigned. However, all Houseparents need to be in good physical, mental and emotional health. They must be cooperative and comfortable working in a team environment.

To apply for the current Houseparent openings, please contact Celeste Cade at ccade@baptistchildrensvillage.com or 601-922-2242.

A complete job description and application may be downloaded at www.baptistchildrensvillage.com.

The Longing • Psalm 42

We have reached our final lesson for this quarter in the book of Psalms. Somewhere along this journey, I promised to use the titles of these thirteen lessons in one sentence of summary and review. It took me more than one, but here goes...

Every step along THE PATH of THE PAST has been tenderly led by THE SHEPHERD; therefore, OUR RESPONSE can only be thanksgiving and gratitude for the abiding promise of HIS PRESENCE. As THE CREATOR, GOD is REVEALED all around us as well as from within us. We are totally surrounded by HIS LOVE for us and eternally secured through HIS FAITHFULNESS to us. THE CONFESSION of my sins must always precede THE CLEANSING of my soul. The Lord is my refuge and THE PROTECTOR of all that concerns me. THE LONGING of my heart is to worship Him.

A study of Psalm 42 is a fitting way to close our study time together. Every Psalm (in fact every word of The Word of God) leaves the committed, dedicated reader "longing for more." This Psalm stakes its claim to that theme from verse one. The sons of Korah are credited in the notes of dedication for the choir director. This Psalm was either penned by them or presented to them as an anthem

to be used in worship. Psalm 42 and 43 appear to be very closely connected thematically. They share a nearly word-for-word common chorus of hope in God which is repeated in 42:5, 42:11, 43:5. Trouble, exile and despair mesh tearfully in a desperate soul crying out to God. Times of joy as well as times of sorrow lean us toward His always open arms, His all-seeing eyes, His listening ears and His caring heart.

In my Bible, I have named Psalm 42 "The Cry-sis of De-hydration" since it is filled with first person pleas of a weary, wounded soul speaking directly to the Lord.

Only when we bide ourselves in God can we find peace and solace and comfort and return to the path to healing and renewed purpose. The desire and longing of the Psalmist for God are expressed as a deep thirst. The shady lady who met Jesus at the well in John 4 could testify to this need for living water. When we connect with the Lord,

we can leave our water pots and run freely in full provision.

Scoffers are gonna scoff. Haters are gonna hate. Thank goodness, God seekers are gonna find God...every time. We become like that which we worship. If our hope is in God, our despair takes a hike. This Psalmist was a worshipper. Part of the despair described here indicates that worship had been either denied by outside forces for a time or possibly been neglected by the worshipper.

Either scenario would bring despair through perceived helplessness or through conviction by the Holy Spirit. Recalling the

joy of personal participation in the procession of festival keepers brought tears of remembrance, revealing a deep longing to return to the house of God and bask corporately in the presence of God.

Head waters of the Sea of Galilee and the Jordan River originate in northern Israel with melting mountain snows coupled with underground

Explore the Bible

with Becky Brown



Right Here, Right Now • Mark 5:1-2, 8-15, 18-20

I love missions. Early in life the pull of going and sharing Jesus was embedded in my heart. There is nothing better than seeing the work of missionaries the world over in using their gifts and creativity to tell the story of Jesus. Currently, I have the honor of connecting local churches with mission opportunities all around them. Oftentimes this position includes travel to far off places. Every stamp in my passport is a testimony to the great need our planet has for Jesus. Just this summer I was part of groups that served from Washington, D.C. to Kona, Hawaii. My heart broke as I saw the overwhelming need for the gospel.

Usually such thoughts are the first that come to mind when we think of missions. Airplanes and passports being implemented in telling people of another context about a relationship with God. May I submit that while this scene is true and needed there are plenty of mission opportunities closer than we might think. The sad reality is that we are surrounded by people that need Jesus. Locating these people is not difficult. Often, as we see in today's text, they will find us. What then? When we are face to face with the lost, what do we share? Even when our languages are different, our message of hope never changes and we must share certain truths.

What we are – vs. 1-2

Later in this scene (9) Jesus has a formal introduction with this man but here all we learn of this is what he is, not who he is. He is a broken man that is fighting demons day and night. As believers, we never know what those surrounding us are going through, especially those people that are unnamed to us. We do not know the name of the cashier, the police officer, the janitor or the receptionist that we see daily. We can rest assured that those people whose paths we cross are broken, as is all of humanity (Rom. 3:23) and the answer to that brokenness is found in our Savior. We have all failed at one point or another. That is what we are and we must share that information.

What Jesus does – vs. 8-13

Can you fathom being shackled and chained and living in a cemetery? The isolation would have been torment.

Such a dark existence in which to live. Away from family. No employment possible. No friends within sight. Very few Bible characters can complete with this man's sad story. The gospel found its way into such a place. Note that this man does not request a healing. Jesus is so full of compassion that His first words were to the ones tormenting the man. Jesus saw the need and sought out the man's relief. This is what He does. Jesus sees our needs. He knows our brokenness and only He provides salvation.



This is what Jesus does and we must share this information.

What our response must be – vs. 18-20

Where does my love of missions fit into this scene? Simple. At no point do I need a passport to share the gospel. This can be done closer to home. In fact, missions must begin in our homes. Those that know us best, warts and all,

springs. Mt. Hermon is tall and majestic and snow-covered much of the year. Mt. Mizar (little) indicated a smaller mountain. Tall or small: all difficulties find help and hope and healing in God. His lovingkindness in the daytime proceeds into a night song of comfort that closes with a prayer lifted to the God of all comfort. Praying and singing can become one word: PraySing.

Many times, we find ourselves in despair due to the fact that our spiritual lives are in disrepair. Whether our afflictions are externally imposed or self-inflicted, God hears our cries for help. Our Living Water is also our Life Preserver. Our bone-crushing life events are salvaged by One whose bones were unbroken even on the cross.

These precious Old Testament Psalms were penned pre-New Testament, but they were without question pointing us directly to Jesus who would be a man of the mountains. Born in the shepherd hills of Bethlehem. Raised in the rolling hills of the Galilee. Preached on the Mt. of Beatitudes. Revealed on the Mt. of Transfiguration. Arrested on the Mt. of Olives in Gethsemane. Crucified on Mt. Calvary. Longing for Him...?

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are the ones that will see the greatest difference that Jesus has made in our lives. This man desired to join Jesus' band of traveling disciples but no. Jesus has this man return home (19) so that those who know his torment can witness the power of Jesus in his life. Interestingly the pig farmers did the same. They return to their town to report what Jesus has done but not to the tormented man but to their pigs. (14-16) The livelihood of these herdsmen has been interrupted and the first response from the people is for Jesus to leave. (17) In a strange reversal of priorities, these people seemed to care more for the pigs than for this man. Where was the rejoicing in his healing?

Now it was the former demon possessed man's turn to go into the village and proclaim not the loss of income from pigs but the newness of life in Jesus. There is no better evangelism tool than a life changed by the mercy of Christ. This must be our response to the broken world around us. When our broken lives are viewed as healed by Jesus, He receives the glory and a watching world will marvel (20b).

Anthony is director of the Collaborative Missionary Network, Oxford/Holly Springs.

HOLEMAN

cont. from p.2

understand, and Jesus followers are waiting for the teaching and growth that comes

through a relationship with other Christians.

Training is available

Training is available through several mission orga-

nizations. The International Mission Board offers Missions College each January, led by former and current missionaries to the Americas. This training is designed to assist the churches called to work

among unreached people and places in the Americas.

There are opportunities for training through other mission organizations. Any follower of Christ and any church can be used by God,

and the training is available to equip them for the task.

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Survey reveals American attitudes toward sin

NASHVILLE (BP) — Two-thirds of Americans acknowledge they are sinners, but only five percent of them say they have no desire to mend their ways.

That's according to a recently-released survey conducted by LifeWay Research, the evangelical research arm of LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention in Nashville that specializes in surveys about faith in culture and matters that affect churches.

America is becoming more secular but the concept of sin still rings true, said Scott McConnell, executive director of LifeWay Research. "Almost nobody wants to be a sinner," he said.

The survey question about sin was inspired in part by an exchange McConnell witnessed on his way to a Nashville Predators hockey game. A religious group of protesters began preaching at people on the street outside the hockey arena and calling them sinners, McConnell said.

That led a few people in the crowd to embrace the title with enthusiasm. "I wondered how many people really think of themselves as sinners," McConnell said.

Americans tend to fall into three categories when it comes to sin, according to LifeWay Research's representative survey of 1,000 Americans conducted Sept. 27-Oct. 1, 2016.

A third of Americans say they are sinners and are working on being less sinful, while 28% say they are sinners and rely on Jesus to overcome their sin. One in 10 say sin doesn't exist, or that they are not sinners (eight percent) while 15% prefer not to say if they are sinners at all.

Only one in 20 of the people surveyed said they are fine with being sinners. Among the other findings:

■ Folks in the Northeast (ninth percent) are more likely to be fine with being sinners than those in the South (five percent)

Americans' views on sin:

Which of the following best describes you?

I am a sinner, and I work on being less of one.

34%

I am a sinner, and I depend on Jesus Christ to overcome sin.

28%

Sin does not exist.

10%

I am not a sinner.

8%

I am a sinner, and I am fine with that.

15%

I prefer not to say.

15%



LifeWayResearch.com

and West (four percent). They're also more likely to say sin does not exist (14%).

■ Americans with evangelical beliefs are more likely to say they rely on Jesus to overcome their sin (72%) than those without evangelical beliefs (19%).

■ Nones, those with no religious preference, are more likely to say sin does not exist (32%). Ten percent of nones say they are fine with being sinners, while 27% say they work on overcoming their sin. Six percent say they depend on Jesus to overcome sin.

■ Members of non-Christian faiths (27%) are more likely to say they are not sinners than Christians (seven percent) and nones (six percent).

■ Catholics are more likely than Protestants to work to be less of a sinner (48% vs. 31%) and to say they are not a sinner (11% vs. five percent), but less likely to say they depend on Jesus Christ to overcome sin (19% vs. 49%).

■ Americans ages 18-44 are twice as likely (14%) as those 45 and older (seven percent) to say sin doesn't exist.

A 2016 LifeWay study about theology also found many Americans think sin is commonplace. In that study, two-thirds agreed everyone sins a little but most people are good by nature. Fifty-seven percent said it would be fair for God to show His wrath against sin.

However, few Americans seemed to think most sins put them in spiritual danger. Three-quarters of Americans disagreed with the idea that even the smallest sin deserves eternal damnation. That in-

cludes almost 62% who strongly disagreed.

In the current survey, McConnell said he was struck by how few Americans outside of those with evangelical beliefs say they rely on Jesus to overcome sin, a core Christian belief.

"To some Americans, saying you're a sinner is a way of admitting you are not perfect," he said. "To those folks, it doesn't necessarily mean you're evil or should be punished for your sin. That's something the church should pay attention to."

Small churches most effective at attracting unchurched

WHEATON, Ill. (BP) — Attracting and keeping people considered unchurched is rated as the top predictor of growth through new professions of faith at small churches, according to a new study encompassing 12 Christian denominations including Southern Baptists.

These churches are places of invitation, welcome, and involvement for the unchurched," the study's authors said, "so the unchurched stick around in greater numbers and they come to Christ and get committed to the church in greater numbers."

The Billy Graham Center of Wheaton College in Wheaton, Ill., conducted the study in partnership with Lifeway Research of the Southern Baptist Convention in Nashville and the Caskey Center for Church Ex-

cellence at New Orleans Seminary (NOBTS).

The telephone survey of 1,500 pastors and church leaders found and ranked 29 predictors of growth through Christian conversion at churches of 250 members or less.

Second to attracting and keeping the unchurched, small churches that grow by Christian conversions tend to offer classes for new attendees, the study found. Such classes help even when they are not ever gelistic.

Thirdly, small churches that grow through new baptisms are led by pastors who routinely undergo personal evangelism training.

"If the pastor is a learner and stays inspired and growing in the area of evangelism," study authors said, "that pastor's church

will reach more people who commit to Christ and who stick."

In response to declining baptisms in the U.S., Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) President Steve Gaines appointed a 19-member evangelism task force at the 2017 SBC annual meeting. The group of SBC seminary presidents and professors, pastors, and a state convention leader are expected to report its findings at the 2018 SBC annual meeting in Dallas.

Nearly 90% of Southern Baptist churches had weekly attendance of 250 or less as recently as 2013, according to figures Tolbert released in 2016 as vice chairman of the Bivocational and Smaller Church Advisory Council of the SBC Executive Committee.

The figures drawn from the 2013 Annual Church Profile, and compiled jointly by the Caskey

Center and the NOBTS Leavell Center for Church Health, placed 89% of Southern Baptists congregations in the small church category.

In the Wheaton study, the other top growth predictors among small churches are:

■ The pastor more frequently "pops the question," asking people to commit after he shares the Gospel.

■ The church spends a higher percentage of its budget on evangelism and missions.

■ Church members often tell the pastor that they themselves are sharing the Gospel with others, rather than relying on the pastor to carry the load alone.

■ Unchurched visitors often communicate favorable feedback to pastors after weekly worship services.

■ The church shares the Gospel outside its walls and conducts community service.

■ Churches that grow through conversion tend to draw members from other congregations.

■ Cited as the 10th most predictive factor of growth through new conversions, according to the study, "the pastor more frequently blocks out time in the calendar for the purpose of sharing the Gospel with non-Christians."

Smaller churches in the survey, those with 150 or fewer members, tended to grow more easily than the larger small churches in the survey, the study found. Additionally, predominantly Hispanic and Native American churches tended to fare better in growth.

Lifeway Research has released the full report at lifewayresearch.com.